

Unity!

**PUBLIC SECTOR
PAY CLAIMS
£18 billion**

**INCREASE IN
MILITARY SPEND
£17 billion**

STRIKE WAVE FORCES THE TORIES ON THE BACK FOOT

▲ Coventry strikers demonstrate

**NICK WRIGHT
STRIKES**

AS CHANCELLOR Jeremy Hunt stood up to deliver his 'budget for the rich' more than half a million workers from nine trade unions were on strike and thousands thronged the streets of towns and cities throughout the country.

Hunt announced that big corporations will harvest £28 billion in tax breaks but public spending – measured against the size of the economy – is set to fall while pay lags behind in a profit-driven inflationary spiral.

Trade union leaders took issue with the chancellor for his failure to deal with the pay disputes gripping schools, hospitals, universities, the civil service, London Underground and the BBC regions.

TUC leader Paul Nowak hammered Hunt for his failure to tackle the 'longest pay squeeze for more than 200 years.'

'The elephant in the room is the lack of funding for our public services and the pay rises needed to recruit and retain nurses,

carers and teachers', he said.

And Unison general secretary Christina McAnea weighed in saying: 'It's funny how the Chancellor can lay his hands on billions when he wants while insisting the country can't afford to pay key workers more.'

Government priorities

Jeremy Hunt's insistence that public sector pay claims are 'unaffordable' blew up in his face when it was revealed that defence spending will go up by £17 billion – channelling massive profits to arms firms – while the cost of meeting the pay claims is a broadly comparable to £18 billion.

Step by step, in one sector after another the government is being forced to enter talks with unions.

As the government's divide and rule strategy wilts in the face of the continuing strike wave a sense is growing that the government is on the run.

With the right wing class collaboration wing of Labour now set to secure a two generation grip on the parliamentary Labour Party workers

are looking to their unions and mass action to protect their pay and conditions.

Government crisis in Scotland where the Scottish Nationalist administration is mired in controversy and infighting the focus is increasingly on class issues.

Speaking to an upbeat meeting of the Communist Party's executive committee Scottish communist leader Tom Morrison said: 'Class politics hold the key to resolving the national question, bringing down the Conservative government at Westminster and isolating the fascists.'

He said the contest to succeed Nicola Sturgeon as leader of the SNP and Scotland's First Minister was exposing deep divisions within the nationalist party.

'The main leadership candidates want to take the SNP in a more neoliberal and pro-big business direction and hand over Scottish sovereignty to the EU and NATO, whereas many SNP voters are on the left and one-third of them voted take Scotland and Britain out of the EU', he argued.

Page 3 for Tom Morrison's analysis.

'SOCIAL EUROPE' ILLUSIONS DEFLATE



**Andy Bain
CLASS COMPROMISE**

EUROPEAN TRADE union leaders have protested at European Union plans to further deregulate the 'single market' rules.

Harking back to EU commissioner Jacques Delors' infamous eulogy to the capitalist common market the European TUC's spokeswoman said that the Commission's latest plans for the future of the single market "increases the disconnect between Europe and working people" and puts the EU on course for a race to the bottom.

By 1988 the TUC and the Labour Party had abandoned their long standing opposition to the Common Market and fell hook, line and sinker for the class compromise line peddled by the French social democratic functionary-turned-Eurocrat Jacques Delors. He bamboozled a TUC conference with a fairy tale of a 'social Europe' in which bosses offered a deal.

Always an illusion that failed to mask the

EU's neo liberal drive to privatisation the 'social Europe' myth has further crumbled in the face of the renewed competition between the US and European capitalist blocs.

With Europe cut off from cheap energy resources following the US strategy of sanctions against Russia, European manufacturers face double-trouble in their export efforts.

Forced to depend on expensive energy imports of fracked US gas and a new hurdle in the form of US government subsidies to its domestic manufacturing European exports to US markets and elsewhere are suffering in the face of protectionist US government subsidies.

Complaining that the number of workers injured by machinery increased following a reduction in safety checks as part of the EU's deregulation agenda the ETUC merely laments that the 'long-term competitiveness of the EU' includes an arbitrary target of cutting 'regulatory burden' by 25 per cent.

In a further sign of its detachment from the realities of inter imperialist conflict the ETUC

lauds a US president largely responsible both for the increased danger of war in Europe and the European export crisis.

Arguing lamely that 'Europe cannot and should not compete based on having low pay and standards but should instead seek to increase productivity through higher investment in skills, quality jobs and technology' the ETUC then complains that the deregulation regime 'places the EU at odds with the United States, where the Biden administration is seeking to raise pay, working conditions and standards through social conditions in the Inflation Reduction Act.

Communist Party general secretary Rob Griffiths said: 'The ETUC's class-cuddle politics leaves it unable to explain how the threat to workers' jobs, wages and conditions comes from the capitalist system itself and the reality of capitalist competition in an age of inter-imperialist conflict.'

ANDY BAIN IS THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S INDUSTRIAL ORGANISER

BUDGET FOR THE RICH

**Robert Griffiths
BUDGET 2023**

WHEN IS A TAX RISE not a tax rise – when it is a tax on corporate profits. Chancellor Jeremy Hunt is going ahead with Prime Minister Sunak's increase in the headline rate of Corporation Tax from 19 per cent to 25 per cent.

He boasts that only one-in-ten companies will pay it. The current loophole for avoidance becomes an enormous chasm, as companies offset real and bogus spending on IT, plant and machinery against tax over the next three years.

That means the Treasury is foregoing around £27bn in Corporation Tax over the next three years – income that could have been invested in green energy-saving and cost-cutting programmes that would keep people warm and help them travel more easily for work, family and leisure purposes.

Hunt talks about a high-wage, low tax economy in which hard work is a highly rewarded virtue. Yet he puts peanuts aside for the genuinely hard-working public sector workers who staff our hospitals, schools and local community services.

At the same time, he lifts the tax-free cap on annual private pension contributions from £40,000 to £60,000 – how many hard-working employees have a spare £5,000 a month to pay into their private pension pot?

The plans to lift the cap on bankers' bonuses are unchanged. Britain's corrupt weapons industry will celebrate an extra £11bn in military spending over the next five years, including £5bn to boost the US-UK-Australian cold war offensive against China.

These giveaways to the rich and big business, amounting to more than £42bn, put the £5bn extra for childcare – after five years of cuts – into proportion. Then there are the billions in public funds that compensate the energy suppliers – under the guise of the 'energy price guarantee' – for not raising their prices even higher, while continuing to pay the wage bills of the train operating companies as they jack up fares.

As living standards are set to fall still further over the next two years, all Chancellor Hunt can offer is the hope that the economy will grow next year while inflation is mystically slashed by two-thirds in time for this Christmas.

A million striking workers have shown that they reject the 'more pain today, perhaps some jam tomorrow' policies of this government but they and millions more will need to fight just as hard to force any future Labour government onto the path of progressive taxation, wealth redistribution, public investment, economic planning and the nationalisation of essential industries and services.

ROBERT GRIFFITHS IS GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY



EVENTS & IDEAS & ACTION

The mass strike is the first natural, impulsive form of every great revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and the more highly developed the antagonism is between capital and labour, the more effective and decisive must mass strikes become.

Rosa Luxemburg *The Role of the Mass Strike in the Revolution*



NEWCASTLE



EUSTON LONDON



LONDON



STRAIGHT LEFT

Stewart McGill on how public sector pay rises are affordable

The government claimed that it would cost an additional £28 billion per annum to pay public sector workers an inflation-matching pay rise. This is nonsense, the true figure after accounting for additional tax receipts would be about £12 billion, see the link: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/public-sector-strikes-pay-rises-nurses-james-meadway/>

How do we pay that? There is scope, plenty of it. Basic rate on dividend tax is 8.75 per cent. Hunt scrapped Kwarteng's 1.25 per cent proposed reduction and the Treasury claim that makes an additional £1 billion for the exchequer. So, if we raise the basic rate tax on dividends to 20 per cent that's an increase of 11.25 percentage points, $11.25 = 9 \times 1.25$ so the Exchequer would be £9 billion better off.

This is not an outrageous proposal, The average dividend tax rate for European OECD countries is just over 23 per cent, more than double the current basic rate here. In 2019 the TUC and the High Pay Centre reported that just 1 per cent of all taxpayers – those earning over £150,000 a year – pocketed 22 per cent of UK dividend payments. And scope also remains to increase the higher rates on dividend tax...

The government also plans to give over £2.3 billion to Ukraine in pursuit of the American proxy war in 2023. Scrap that and we're very close to £12 billion.

And equalising Capital Gains Tax rates with income tax rates alone would raise £17 billion a year—more than enough to sort out many problems, see here: <https://tinyurl.com/783mrk2a>

For these, and a variety of other reasons, do not believe 'there is no alternative'.



GLASGOW

FEDERAL

ORGANISED BY: STRIKE MAP Morning Star Organise Now! CoDIR

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NCI CENTER HOLLAND STREET CAMBRIDGE CB4 3DL

ADMISSION: SOLIDARITY £8 | GENERAL £4 | STUDENTS/UNEMPLOYED £2

Nations and Working-Class Unity in Britain

John Foster

A COMMUNIST PARTY PAMPHLET

£2



www.shop/communistparty.org.uk

▲ John Foster's new pamphlet sets out how the communists defend the right of the Scottish and Welsh peoples to referendums on their national future. He argues that a referendum limited to a choice between the neo-liberal model of 'independence' offered by the SNP and Plaid Cymru or the neo-liberal Unionist status quo the Tories offer is a distinction without enough of a difference.

The alternative of a progressive federalism – the constitutional solution that tackles the critical question of how the working class can exercise agency in settling the issues of nation and nationalism – is set out with great clarity. The pamphlet sets the national question in the context of the battle to win working class power and argues for working people to collectively re-assert their power and extend it across the whole of Britain.

WEDNESDAY 15 MARCH Hundreds of striking workers and supporters met in Glasgow at the steps at the top of Buchanan Street reports Peter Ward-Stoddart. It represents just one instance of cross-union solidarity seen in Glasgow. On this occasion led by PCS and UCU, both unions have seen hundreds of thousands of their members take to the picket lines, many of whom are doing so for the first time. In the Southside of the City a group was formed last year to support the ever increasing number of striking workers on picket lines and in solidarity across a number of campaigns. From the courts and the schools and universities to Royal Mail, Avanti West Coast and even the co-op coffin makers, the Southside Strike Solidarity group has supported dozens of different unions involved in disputes for better pay and terms and conditions. Hot strike summer may be over, but we're glad to see the increased militancy of ordinary trade union members hasn't faded over winter.

SCOTLAND IN A WORLD OF CRISES WAR, HUNGER, CLIMATE CHANGE

SCOTTISH MORNING STAR CONFERENCE
 Sunday 26 March 2023
 STUC, 8 Landressy Street, Bridgeton G40 1BP
 Bridgeton rail station 100 yards
 Free zoom attendance via
 Eventbrite <https://tinyurl.com/3x4p9d5z>

SCOTLAND IN A WORLD OF CRISES
 Chair: Lynn Henderson Opening: Roz Foyer

WAR IN EUROPE & THE MIDDLE EAST, CONFRONTATION IN THE PACIFIC
 Why Scotland needs Just Transition and defence diversification
 with Tam Kirby, Jenny Clegg, Bill Kidd MSP

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS: HUNGER IN EUROPE: STARVATION ELSEWHERE
 Defending living standards, bargaining rights and public services
 with Michael Roberts (economist), Alex Rowley MSP, Gordon Martin

CLIMATE AT TIPPING POINT: THE LOCAL AND THE INTERNATIONAL GRIP OF THE ENERGY GIANTS
 Why public ownership, democratic control and worker-led transition is the answer with Stephanie Martin, Jackson Cullinane, Coll McCall
 Summing up: Lynn Henderson

ABOVE: Strike pictures from Martin Levy in Newcastle, Alex Gordon in London and RIGHT, Tommy Morrison in Glasgow. Front page picture from Tony Conway

SOCIAL MEDIA
 A Red Salute to our party social media team and in particular to the editor of our Twitter page, which posted throughout the Budget day of Action and covered the events in Paris, gaining for one tweet, 147,000 views and 3,400 new followers!!



CLASS AND NATION

The Communist Party's class alternative to the Tories' fake levelling up agenda or the centralising strategy of the SNP – where both seek to take power from the base in a top down approach – is progressive federalism. This provides an alternative in the interest of our class. It is about ensuring PF is related to current struggles, building democracy from below with a united front of trade unions and the community.

Tom Morrison is secretary of the Communist Party in Scotland

CHARTING A COURSE FOR SCOTLAND'S WORKING CLASS



TOM MORRISON PROGRESSIVE FEDERALISM

SCOTTISH POLITICS have been dominated by the resignation of Nicola Sturgeon as First Minister and the campaign to find her successor.

Humza Yousaf the current health secretary, is seen as the continuity candidate with the most support of SNP MPs and MSPs. He was brutally attacked by another candidate Kate Forbes, the finance secretary, during a TV hustings cross examination session as having failed on his previous positions as transport, community, and health secretaries. Continuity is seen as a poisonous label now that Sturgeon's partner and party boss Murrell has reigned over a cover up of the plummeting membership numbers.

Forbes is, according to polls, running neck and neck with Yousaf among the SNP membership but we are told she has a sizable lead among the general public. She is both socially and economically conservative and would move the SNP more explicitly to a clear right wing agenda.

Ash Regan is seen as out of her depth in the TV hustings. The former minister for community safety, she resigned over gender self ID. She raised the black hole in the SNP finances of £600,000 currently investigated by the police and says she will open the books!

With these three a lack of strategy means an independent Scotland looks some way off. The contest has shown deep divisions in the SNP with splits/mass resignations possible. They have lost 3,000 members and still fail to publish membership figures.

These candidates come across as light weight unable to hold together a party whose members encompasses the class spectrum.

Sturgeon is an able politician who held them together as she managed Scotland's decline with little opposition to Tory cuts.

The bottom line is the SNP, no matter who leads it, has little positive to offer the Scottish working class.

Some argue that the SNP is a classless party but as their support for the neo liberal EU shows they have a leadership embedded in the politics of the right. A third of the SNP's electoral support voted to leave the EU, while many see an independent Scotland as an escape route from Tory government.

Alliances with SNP supporters can be built and are being built in campaigns on the ground. Where Scottish communists and their allies have argued for a third option in a future referendum in opposition to a binary choice between the Union and so-called 'independence'. Through this approach we have attracted some nationalists who disagree with the SNP.

There is a motion on the third option on Scottish TUC agenda at April's Congress and it might be an idea for our English and Welsh comrades to start raising the need for regional assemblies with the aim of getting the issue on the agenda of regional TUCs.

Compared to the Tories the SNP can look somewhat liberal but this is a very low bar.

The Communist Party's class alternative to the Tories' fake levelling up agenda or the centralising strategy of the SNP – where both seek to take power from the base in a top down approach – is *progressive federalism*.

This provides an alternative in the interest of our class. It is about ensuring PF is related to current struggles, building democracy from below with a united front of trade unions and the community. This is key. These are the building blocks of any anti-monopoly alliance where class consciousness can be built.

Fighting council cuts is closely related to the progressive feudalism strategy. Sustained local action is needed, bringing together community-based campaign organisations, local trade union branches and trades councils. While most people involved in such campaigns see this initially as a local campaign to change council policy in essence it is a challenge to the ruling class offensive.

Several local councils face calls by unions and communities for 'no cuts' budgets which

would have left the Scottish government facing a political crisis as they would be sending their officials to take over councils where they would be bitterly opposed.

Rather we have had to listen to spineless 'responsible' councillors congratulating themselves as they pass savage cuts on their constituents and workforces.

The cuts open up an opportunity for the fascists to parachute into deprived local communities and exploit genuine concerns on racist and far right terms. This is happening all over Britain and is the current strategy of the fascist Patriotic Alternative.

Erskine, just outside Glasgow, is focus of concern in Scotland. A big effort has gone into backing the local Paisley TUC in taking the lead in a locally led campaign.

The party and its allies are trying to address the situation where real social problems exist. Asylum seekers have been placed in a local hotel without any community consultation raising an issue on which the fascists play.

The Tory Government strategy is intentionally encouraging racist attitudes and the far right. Yet the cuts are what cause the social problems in Erskine and elsewhere are unnecessary.

The Scottish Government's underspend last year was £2billion and their proposed National Care Service which the trade unions want binned is to cost £1.2billion. So the cash is there.

Trade union backed campaigns are on fertile ground to build the necessary class consciousness if they inject the class politics that is so badly needed.

Workers and their families are saying enough is enough. In a period of greatly increased industrial militancy and if the work is done at the base there is a real possibility of winning masses to support left radical alternatives led by the labour movement.

TOM MORRISON IS THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S SCOTTISH SECRETARY

The debate around the Gender Recognition Bill approved by the Scottish parliament but now vetoed by the British government raises knotty political problems that highlight the Tories culture wars strategy, democracy and the class and constitutional issues raised

This issue of Unity! tackles these questions with firstly an edited version of Tom Morrison's report to the Communist Party leadership, the statement issued by the party on Scotland's Gender Recognition Act and Laura Miller's take from afar on the culture wars around the issues of gender and sex.

Welcome to the Culture Wars

Laura Miller SCOTLAND

AFTER THE *sturm und drang*, the shock, the encomiums and the brickbats for Nicola Sturgeon, we now have the reality – three candidates to take her place as leader of the Scottish National Party and First Minister.

One cannot live in the public eye these days and not have a lot known about you. Gone are the days when Franklin D Roosevelt, the only US president elected for four consecutive terms, could keep secret (with the help of the media) that his legs were weakened by polio and he could not stand.

So, in alphabetical order we have:

Kate Forbes, presently finance minister, Ash Regan, not in the government because she resigned over the Gender Recognition Reform Bill in 2022, and Humza Yousaf, presently health secretary.

What do we know about these people?

Kate Forbes; A religious 'wee free', member of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. This is a Calvinist evangelical denomination that sees, as an example, Christmas as a pagan abomination, and which has strict rules about sex and childbirth outside of marriage (both a no-no), and homosexuality and same sex marriage (definitely a no-no). She was interviewed by the BBC in February and – shock, horror – actually answered a question

truthfully about the latter. She would not have voted for the Gender Recognition Bill or same-sex marriage, but she wasn't planning on trying to change anything already in law.

Truth-telling by politicians always leads to controversy, and some Members of the Scottish Parliament have withdrawn their support for her. Oddly enough her stance has led to others – mosques and Muslim groups – saying they will back her because of her stance.

Humza Yousaf, a Pakistani-Scot who took his oath of office both in English and Urdu, sees himself as a socially liberal supporter of gay marriage. He has stated his support for the Gender Bill, for which the mosques and Muslim groups have changed their allegiance. They prefer a strict Presbyterian to a fellow Muslim. Thus does politics make for strange bedfellows. (Metaphorically only of course.)

He is committed to challenging the UK over its decision to block the Gender Recognition Bill and wants to increase support for independence before trying for a referendum. Seen as a Sturgeon loyalist and in line with her policies, he has been brought in to her cabinet each time she changed it.

Ash Regan has said she would abandon the Gender Recognition Bill and she would ensure that all transgender women prisoners go to men's prisons and all transgender men would be in women's prisons – or maybe there would be a trans wing in prisons.

Hamza Yousaf has said if he were First Minister he would consider appointing Kate Forbes to his cabinet. But if she becomes First Minister (thinking aloud here) he might not want to serve under her, especially if she tried to turn the progressive party positions rightward.

On the constitutional question, ie, whether or not to have an election which, according to Nicola Sturgeon, could be construed as a referendum on independence, the views are confused. Regan would abandon the idea of using elections and would begin negotiations with the UK government. Forbes has said she would not challenge the UK government's veto.

Up until the writing of this article, there has only been one poll, published on 25 February, which showed Forbes running first with 23 per cent, 15 per cent for Hamza and 7 per cent for Regan. The rest were "don't knows". As the diminished numbers of SNP members get closer to voting we will see if the 'don't knows' become 'do knows' and who they vote for. Because the voting is done by single transferable vote, the vote closes on 27 March and the result probably will be declared the same day.

In the meantime, as election fever mounts, we'll see if the culture wars take over reality in the Scottish elections.

LONDON-BASED LAURA MILLER COMES ORIGINALLY FROM THE USA AND WRITES FOR UNITY!

THE GENDER RECOGNITION BILL AND EQUALITY LAW

Communist Party executive committee statement

March 12 2023

1 The GRR Bill was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 22 December, 2022. The Bill reforms the 2004 Gender Recognition Act (GRA) for Scotland only. It changes the process for obtaining a gender recognition certificate (GRC) for anyone born or 'ordinarily resident' in Scotland. It aims to change the basis on which people in Scotland can change their sex in law from one of a shared medical diagnosis to that of self-declaration alone ('self-ID') and lowers the qualifying age from 18 to 16.

2 On January 17 this year, the UK government used its powers under Section 35 of the 1998 Scotland Act to stop the Bill receiving Royal Assent. This power of veto can be used in circumstances where an item of Scottish parliamentary legislation is judged by the Secretary of State for Scotland to have an adverse impact on law in areas of policy ('reserved matters') for which the UK Parliament and government are solely or chiefly responsible. Similar provisions apply to the devolved parliaments of Wales and Northern Ireland.

3 The so-called Sewel Convention obliges the UK government to consult the devolved administrations when its own proposed legislation impacts on the powers and policies of the devolved parliaments. Ultimately, the UK Parliament can disregard refusals of consent from the Scottish, Welsh or Northern Ireland legislatures.

4 The Communist Party of Britain and its leadership bodies in Scotland and Wales believe that the current devolution settlement must be protected and improved. However, in the case of the GRR (Scotland) Bill, the intervention by the UK government was entirely predictable given the political struggle over Scotland's constitutional status and the controversies over issues of sex and gender.

5 The flawed approach of the Scottish government over the Bill and its wider effects has been brought persistently to the attention of Scottish ministers over the past four years. During the Edinburgh parliament's scrutiny of the Bill, serious problems were raised by a range of women's and other civil society groups who asked for the Bill to be paused so these could be discussed and resolved, as well as by legal and policy experts and other organisations. Yet ministers consistently denied and dismissed the problems being raised.

6 Unfortunately, discussion around the GRR bill has now become so acrimonious and toxic as to obstruct meaningful and respectful debate. The SNP-Green government in Edinburgh's action has been portrayed as part of their attempt to secure separation from the UK; the Westminster veto – while defending the constitutional status quo and the Equality and Scotland Acts – has been described as taking an opportunity to discredit the SNP and its separatist goal.

7 The Communist Party of Britain believes that the current system for transgender people to gain access to services and achieve safe and legal gender transition requires substantial resourcing. If the aim of this Bill is to make the lives of trans people easier, then it is a failure. The Communist Party supports the right of trans people to live free from discrimination and prejudice. This attempt to change the law does nothing for their access to health, medical, housing, advisory and other services sensitive to their needs.

8 For Communists, the main concerns are about how the GRR Bill (as devolved legislation) interacts with the operation of the 2010 Equality Act (as reserved legislation) across the UK. This is a complex area of law but the crux of the matter rests on two main things.

(i) 'Gender recognition' is both reserved and devolved

9 A system for allowing someone to change their legal sex has to work across Britain as a whole. This is because the legal term 'sex' is referred to in hundreds of pieces of legislation which are both reserved to Westminster and devolved to the Scottish Parliament. For this reason, when the Labour government decided to introduce the 2004 Gender Recognition Act it reached agreement with the devolved assemblies/ parliaments that the Westminster government would create a single legal framework for Britain as a whole. To make this possible, the Scottish Parliament passed the Sewel resolution granting consent for Westminster to legislate in devolved areas for this specific purpose.

10 These facts were known by the Scottish government and by civil servants before it embarked on going it alone in reforming the GRA in Scotland. It was always clear that a Scotland-only scheme would mean that Gender Recognition Certificates issued in Scotland would apply only to reserved areas of law. Anyone applying for and obtaining a GRC in Scotland under the new scheme could be sure of their rights in relation to devolved areas – such as the recording of births, deaths and marriages by the National Records of Scotland, or the Scottish NHS – but would have no idea where they stood in relation to reserved areas such as pensions, (most) social security benefits and areas covered by the Equality Act such as employment protection during pregnancy, maternity pay and other important rights.

11 Instead of resolving these issues, ideally in advance of introducing legislation, the Scottish government stuck to its position that the GRR bill had no effect at all on the operation of the Equality Act. They continue to claim it is an administrative change only and there is simply nothing to consider.

12 This is despite a legal judgement clarifying the matter, made on December 13, 2022 (For Women Scotland vs The Scottish Government). This ruling established that a GRC *changes someone's legal sex for all purposes under the 2010 Equality Act*. Legal counsel for the Scottish government successfully argued this case in court. Despite this, Scottish ministers chose not to pause the Bill so that the implications of this important ruling could be understood before MSPs had their final vote on the Bill.

13 The face of the Bill may include wording that it 'does not affect the operation of the 2010 Equality Act' (a Labour amendment), but this is meaningless because by effect the Bill certainly does.

(ii) The GRR Bill means there would be different legal definitions of sex in Scotland and in England & Wales

14 The effect of the Bill is that the legal definition of a 'man' and a 'woman' and the people who are included in these categories will be different in Scotland than in England and

Wales. In other words, there will be two different legal definitions of sex in operation within the UK. No-one knows how that will work in practice. It has never been examined. It is likely to mean that people with a Scottish GRC will have separate legal identities for different purposes.

15 The effect is to create legal chaos for service providers and organisations in the different countries of the UK and for UK- and Britain-wide organisations. The groups of people in sex-related categories will be entirely different in Scotland on one side and England and Wales on the other.

16 In particular, the UK Gender Recognition Act 2004 focuses on people with 'gender dysphoria' – their sexed body causes psychological distress such that medical/ surgical interventions are deemed necessary. They are the only group eligible for a GRC and thereby entitled to change their legal sex on their birth certificate.

17 The Scottish GRR Bill allows anyone over the age of 16 access to a GRC, with no medical requirement. Anyone is eligible who self-identifies into an 'acquired gender' and can provide fairly minimal evidence of living in this for at least three months is eligible. Sex offenders and those charged with sexual offences can apply, MSPs having voted down amendments to exclude them. The implications of self-ID as the sole requirement for access to single-sex spaces and facilities are serious when it comes to safeguarding women and children from predatory and abusive behaviour by men who can simply declare themselves to be women.

18 This reform could pose great difficulties for education institutions, sports organisations and other clubs and societies. They have to work out how to meet their legal duties under the 2010 Equality Act and make defensible decisions. They must balance conflicts of rights under the Equality Act and, if they are public sector bodies, fulfil the public sector equality duty and promote good relations between people with different 'protected characteristics' (which include 'sex' and 'gender reassignment'). This is not a simple matter, and there are sure to be legal challenges. Navigating complex legislation while managing different legal definitions of sex which contain very different groups within them will not be easy.

19 When these questions were asked as the Bill went through the Edinburgh parliament, the Scottish government said it was up to the Equality and Human Rights Commission to draw up guidance. It refused the EHRC's request for the Bill to be paused so these issues could be examined. Some argue these changes involve very small numbers of people and therefore the impact will be minimal. However, the wider context of the social transitioning of children in schools under government guidance puts that in doubt.

20 Meanwhile, the Welsh government has announced its intention to assist trans people to gain GRCs without a diagnosis of gender dysphoria; enhance their access to a full range of tailored services; and 'ban all aspects' of conversion practices. No Bill has yet been published and it is recognised that powers currently reserved to Westminster under the Wales Act may be necessary to carry out this programme in full. The UK central government has made clear it will veto any Welsh Bill which seeks to assume these reserved powers

unilaterally.

21 The Welsh government also pledges to uphold women's rights and spaces. Its LGBT Action Plan (2023) claims there is a 'lack of evidence' that trans-inclusion would have any adverse impact on women's single-sex services and facilities and no evidence at all to justify a blanket exclusion of trans people from them. Instead, exclusion from single-sex services should be considered on a case-by-case basis as provided for in the 2010 Equality Act.

22 Heavily influenced by Stonewall rather than by a desire to boost the case for independence, the motivations of the Welsh government appear to be different in this fundamental respect from those of its Plaid Cymru partners and the SNP government in Scotland. Nonetheless, should it choose to go down the same constitutional cul-de-sac as the GRR Bill by attempting to provide for gender self-ID, the same opportunity will be missed to provide and improve services for trans people.

In summary and conclusion

- The UK government's veto of the GRR (Scotland) Bill was entirely predictable. The real issue here is self-ID and the impact of legislating for it.
- If the aim of this Bill was to make the lives of trans people easier then it has not only been a failure; it is also proving to be counter-productive.
- Anyone gaining a GRC under this Bill would have no certainty about the rights it confers. This is because of the fundamentally flawed approach taken by the Scottish government which, among other things, has meant that specific measures in its Bill have not won broad public support.
- The real innovation of this Bill is to legislate for the self-ID of someone's legal sex, embedding self-declared 'gender identity' in law. But when pursued to the exclusion of such considerations as the sex-based rights of women, and the fragmentation of equality legislation across Britain, it undermines the drive to build unity within and between the working class and the oppressed and disadvantaged groups in our society.
- The Communist Party is the only political party with a coherent political analysis of sex and gender. Gender as an ideological construct should not be confused or conflated with the material reality of biological sex. Gender is the vehicle through which misogyny is enacted and normalised. Gender identity ideology is well-suited to the needs of the capitalist class, focusing as it does on individual as opposed to collective rights, enabling and supporting the super-exploitation of women.
- For these reasons, the Communist Party rejects gender self-ID as the basis for sex-based entitlements in law to women's single-sex rights, spaces and facilities. The Party will continue to oppose any proposed legislation – whether at Scottish, Welsh or British level – that seeks to enact such a provision.
- We call for 'sex' as a protected characteristic under the 2010 Equality Act to be defined as 'biological sex'.
- At the same time, Communists are clear that efforts must continue to improve the resourcing of the current system for transgender people to access services and to transition legally, not just in Scotland but across Britain. Together with the defence and improvement of women's sex-based services and facilities, this is part of the broader struggle for democratic rights, social justice and socialism.



international bulletin

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Opposition grows to 'Settler Government'



Robert Wilkinson
PALESTINE

IN WHAT HAS been described as a 'pogrom' (reminiscent of the antisemitic riots in Tsarist Russia) Jewish settlers in the West Bank rampaged through several Arab villages at the end of February setting fire to houses and cars, killing one man and injuring more than 100 others.

Member of the Knesset (MK) Ofer Cassif of the Hadash group, who recently spoke at a meeting at the Marx Memorial Library, wrote that the pogrom was the work of 'settler terror militia' working under the protection of the 'occupation regime to carry out war crimes.'

Fellow MK Aida Touma-Sliman also condemned the attacks tweeting 'The settlers are committing a horrific crime tonight in Huwara – burning homes while families are inside and wreaking havoc They are acting in the spirit of the fascist government'.

The elections held in November last year resulted in a qualitative change in the character of the government of Israel. The previous coalition of Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid that included an Arab party (Ra'am) in government for the first time, was replaced by the most extreme right-wing government ever as Benjamin Netanyahu was forced to rely upon the Religious Zionist Party, which doubled its vote, as his own party (Likud) saw its share of the vote decline from 24.2% to 23.4%.

Despite the decline in vote share, Likud increased its representation in the Knesset by 2 seats as the seats held by the centre and left parties declined. The fragmentation of their votes meant that two parties (Arab party Balad and Left-Zionist Meretz) both failed to meet the 3.25% threshold and consequently lost their seats. The recent AGM of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in London was addressed by Sami Abou Shahadeh, leader of the Balad party, without any explanation or apology for the decision of Balad to withdraw from the joint list with left-wing Hadash and Arab party Ta'al on the eve of the election, thus helping Netanyahu to victory despite the increase of the Arab and Hadash vote by 35 per cent to over 510,000.

The Religious Zionist Party led by Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir draws much of its core support from Jewish voters in the illegal settlements in the West Bank and Golan Heights and those obliged to withdraw from Gaza. This party included those who formally advocated the expulsion of the Arab population of Israel but now have their sights on the incorporation of the West Bank into a greater Israel after their already successful annexation of the Golan Heights seized in 1967 from Syria.

The need for solidarity and unity amongst the opposition to the Netanyahu government has been evident in the growing demonstrations against its intention to make the Supreme Court subservient to their Knesset majority. Despite the limitations of

the movement as very few of the 20 per cent of the Arab Israeli population participate in the protests, Ahmad Tibi head of the Arab Ta'al party argued that 'we oppose the judicial reforms of the Netanyahu government ... because in the end it is possible that the Supreme Court will be the last resort for minorities and weak groups on certain issues It doesn't always help, but it's a last resort'.

The developing unity was also evident in the demonstrations showing solidarity with the victims of the Huwara pogrom when members of the Communist Party and left-wing Meretz were attacked by Israeli soldiers and prevented from attending. Other protesters opposing the eviction of Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah in east Jerusalem were arrested, clubbed and sprayed with 'skunk water'. Nevertheless, over a thousand demonstrators protested in the capital Tel Aviv in 'emergency protests against the settler government lighting the country on fire'.

Despite threats of violence, even in the Knesset and its committees, brave voices such as Ofer Cassif, continue to speak out against what they denounce as a 'fascist coup' to silence the opposition. As the protestors in the streets carrying red and Palestinian flags chant 'The settler government is bad for all of us'.

ROBERT WILKINSON IS A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY MIDDLE EAST GROUP

'PUTTING THE PEOPLE FIRST'

Kevan Nelson
CHINA AND BRITAIN

A BRITISH COMMUNIST delegation attended an online conference 'The CPC in dialogue with World Political Parties – high-level meeting' on 15 March, an event organised by the CPC's international department.

Over 650 delegates representing 530 political parties including numerous governing parties and Communist parties from every continent on the planet.

The theme of the conference was the Path towards Modernisation and the keynote speaker was Xi Jinping general secretary of the CPC and president of the Peoples Republic of China. Xi stated that a cold war mentality is haunting humanity and the choice

facing the world is polarisation or common prosperity. A zero sum game or win-win. Xi posed the question 'what kind of modernisation do we need and how can we achieve it?' – only by putting the people first will the ultimate goal of free, well-rounded and sustainable development be achieved. The principle of national independence and diverse paths to modernisation for developing countries must be upheld.

China's path to modernisation is one of common prosperity for all and China will provide new opportunities for development across the world. China's door will only open wide, added Xi.

China supports a fair and just security architecture and the world does not need a New Cold War. The CPC proposes a Global Civilisation Initiative and promotes party-to-

party relationships.

Other keynote speakers included South African president Cyril Ramaphosa, leader of the ANC 'a movement steeped in traditions of revolutionary process and keen to advance the best of human civilisation'; Nicolas Maduro of the PSUV Venezuela; Daniel Ortega FSLN Nicaragua; Aleksander Vucic President of Serbia and Serbia Progressive Party who stated that China's Belt and Road initiative had shown the world what could be achieved by a government committed to world peace. Russia was represented by Boris Gryzlov Russian ambassador to Belarus and former United Russia leader.

<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202303/15/WS6411b4dda31057c47ebb4ab5.html>

INSIDE

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PERU IN REVOLT

Jon Hailay
PERU

From the moment in late 2020, when it looked like there was a possibility that the people of Peru would elect an indigenous Peruvian with a progressive agenda to the Presidency the following summer, the forces of right wing reaction swung into action.

The US named CIA veteran Lisa Kenna as the new ambassador and incumbent President Keiko Fujimori, son of former dictator Alberto Fujimori and doyen of the entrenched, right wing oligarchy in Lima, began assembling a powerful team of the capitals finest lawyers to challenge any results going against her. As the elections approached and Castillo held a slender lead in the opinion polls, Vladimiro Montesinos – political heavyweight, former spymaster (and CIA asset) and right-hand to Alberto Fujimori – began co-ordinating elements within the Fujimori camp from his prison cell where he is serving a 22-year sentence for multiple charges including corruption and embezzlement. These telephone conversations were recorded (the Vladiaudio tapes), and they show Montesinos arranging the bribery of three electoral magistrates of the National Jury of Elections (JNE) and for Keiko Fujimori's then husband (a US citizen) to approach the Office of Regional Affairs and the CIA at the US Embassy in Lima with evidence of alleged election fraud and alleged interference by the governments of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

When the first results were announced after polls closed Fujimori was ready with 134 individual challenges and over 800 pending and from the day when Castillo was eventually sworn in as President on the 28th July after weeks of legal wrangling, he faced an onslaught of lawfare and political sabotage from the Fujimori camp, Congress, the judiciary and the media resulting in 18 months of unabated political instability, many cabinet changes - affected to try and appease congress - changes in Castillo's political direction and the abandonment of principles laid out before his election, numerous impeachment and no-confidence motions, a break with Castillo's party, and eventually his arrest on December 7th after attempting to dissolve Congress.

The day before the coup, on December 6th, Kenna had had a meeting with Gustavo Bobbio, the Defence Minister and she was then allegedly the last person to call Castillo before his arrest on the 7th. The day after the coup, on December 8th, Kenna, on behalf of the US government, recognised Peru's new coup government under Dina Boluarte, Castillo's most recent vice president.

Since that day, the poor of Peru have been out on the streets demanding the resignation of Boluarte, the release of Castillo, fresh elections, the establishment of a constituent assembly to replace the old, Fujimori constitution which is widely seen as favouring the establishment and disenfranchising the poor and indigenous sectors of society, and the dissolution of the right wing controlled Congress which has acted as the enforcer of this establishment. They have since faced a wave of brutal repression unleashed by Boluarte. 76 deaths to date including protesters – and even non-participating bystanders – shot by live rounds from helicopter-borne snipers. There have been massacres – in Juliaca where 18 people were killed and scores more injured on January 9th and in Ayacucho on December 15th when ten people were killed and dozens more injured.


Morning Star
Daily paper of the left
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ON IMPERIALISM

“Imperialism is a system of exploitation that occurs not only in the brutal form of those who come with guns to conquer territory. Imperialism often occurs in more subtle forms, a loan, food aid, blackmail. We are fighting this system that allows a handful of men on Earth to rule all of humanity.” **Thomas Sankara 1988**

VICTORY FOR LULA IN BRAZIL



Micaela Tracey Ramos

BRAZIL



THE COMMUNIST PARTY of Brazil celebrated Lula's victory. Luciana Santos pointed out 'Brazil will be happy again! The people elected Lula president so that we can have peace again, have dignity, have food on our plate. It's the feast of democracy. Reason, truth, commitment to the people and to an inclusive project for the country won.'

The communist leader also stressed that "Brazil has said no to retrogression, authoritarianism, hatred and violence. This was the result of hope. The majority of the population has made it clear that they no longer want to live in a divided country with no prospects".

The Communist Party of Brazil was one of the Parties that defended from the beginning, the formation of a broad front to defeat the Bolsonaro extreme right, Luciana recalled that 'Lula represents an alliance that seeks that tomorrow will be full for each one of us.

Ensuring political stability and peace is desperately needed for Lula's left-wing programme to be implemented. Social inequality is huge in Brazil and solving this issue is one of the main challenges that Lula's government face. Millions of Brazilians live below the poverty line, Brazil's six richest men have the same wealth as the poorest 50 percent of the population and there are huge wage gaps between black Brazilians and Brazilian women. Bolsonaro took Brazil to be one of the largest economies in the world- but with extreme inequality.

Challenging inequality

Lula's government has vowed to address this inequality but faces challenges pursuing progressive social transformation in a capitalist economy. One example of this is a neoliberal constitutional amendment which limits public spending which establishes that the government can only spend the same amount that was spent in the previous year, correctly only for inflation. The measure limits for 20 years all federal expenses of a given year to the budget of the previous year, as corrected by an official index (IPCA). Lula pledges to scrap this constitutional clause but as Brazil's GDP slowed in the last quarter of 2022, Lula faces increasing economic pressure from capital.

Lula blames this stagnation of the GDP partially on decisions that are made by Brazil's central bank, which was to raise the interest rate from 2% to 13.75%, when there has not been economic growth. This alleged fear of inflation cannot justify this level of high interest rate in a country

where the economy is not growing. In 2021, Bolsonaro established the central banks autonomy and its board of directors no longer change at the same time when new governments take office, so the BC banks president Capos Neto's term runs until the end of 2024. He was appointed by Bolsonaro and Lula has criticised that he was unelected but has the power to preside over such financial matters. Despite government pressure to leave, Campos Neto remains in place. Large parts of the capitalist media and financial market push the narrative that Campos Neto has more legitimacy than the President of the Republic himself to define monetary policy in line with their own economic interests. These examples highlight the difficulty in pushing forward his economic programme of social transformation under a capitalist economy with little room to manoeuvre in the budget because of what I outlined above. This in our view is the biggest challenge that Lula faces in government.

Another challenge faced by Lula's government is the Capitalist media, which operate to suit their own economic interests- although congratulating Lula once elected Globo, the country's largest television network has a long history in fierce opposition to the Workers Party and many of these media outlets were mouth pieces for the 2016 coup and the wrongful imprisonment of Lula in 2018. Although, they may be able to part ways with Bolsonaro himself as president, they emulate a lot of his ideas and will fight against the implementation of progressive policies under Lula's new government.

On January the 8th, the storming of democratic intuitions in Brazil's capital- the supreme court, the national congress and the presidential palace- further exposed the deep divide that Lula's government have to address. Bolsonaro's invaded and vandalized the Planalto Palace, National Congress and the Federal Supreme Court. Lula's election slogan of 'Union and reconstruction' recognised this divide in the country. However, he is clear that this does not mean amnesty for those who oppose the democracy of the country and on January the 11th Lula made this clear by stating 'Any gesture that goes against Brazilian democracy will be punished within what the law provides for.'

Bolsonarismo is alive in Brazil and political stability to show support for democracy in Brazil is no small task. Post the attempted coup, Lula's government submitted proposals to Congress named the 'Package of Democracy.' There is consensus for these proposals which include penalties for new crimes such as the attempt against the lives of the Presidents of the Republic, the Federal Supreme Court and Congress and a guarantee by law that those involved in coup acts lose their assets. However, democracy and the threat of coup by right wing elements of Brazilian society is real.

Bolsonaro chaos

A report written by Lula's transitional government noted that four years of Bolsonaro's government left the Brazilian state in trouble. State agencies were not performing their functions properly. Key roles were given to Bolsonaro's- including military figures with no knowledge of the departments they were located in. This is goes across other departments such as those responsible for fighting Amazon deforestation. Rebuilding these departments will be a huge task.

Elements of the military were accused of

being involved in the uprising and failing to tackle the rioters. Lula removed 40 soldiers from the presidential palace detail, a sign of his lack of faith in them after the riots.

Bolsonaro had a close relationship with the military. His government was filled with members of the military, from his vice-president to various ministers and over 6,000 troops in different sectors of the administration.

Sections of the army were complicit in setting up conditions for the uprising, and not resolving it. For months, antidemocratic groups were allowed to set up camps around army barracks. Members of the military defended the protesters against the intervention of state and municipal security forces.

Lula has taken strong action to address this by making changes in the army, replacing the general and dismissing soldiers. Lula's rapid response to this attempted coup- putting together the 'Package of Democracy' and changing elements of the army has decreased the threat of a coup but it still remains a threat for Lula's government.

Bolsonaro's government was largely facilitated by an attack on organised labour movement in Brazil. Brazilian trade unions have always placed themselves at the heart of democratic struggle. Progress on LGBT rights, the Afro Brazilian majority and women have been fought for and defended by organised labour. Bolsonaro continued his predecessor's attacks on labour standards and trade union rights. One example he used to weaken the trade union movement in Brazil was outlawing 'checkoff' where trade unions collect membership dues directly from company payrolls, in agreement with the employer. Ending this practice overnight, created an immediate financial and an organisational crisis for Brazil's trade unions- essentially meaning they had to recruit a lot of their own members again. He then dissolved the Ministry of Labour and rolled up all industrial functions into the Ministry of Justice, while the duty to regulate the unions' legal status, as well as oversee pensions and workplace safety, was delivered to the Ministry of Finance under neoliberal economist Paulo Guedes- someone who worked under Pinochet in Chile. By defunding the welfare state and pushing policies that created 'self-employment', there was a significant rise in precarious work which undermined workplace organisation and loosed labour markets.

Lula has reinstated the Ministry of Labour and has emphasised his commitment to defending labour's rights in the face of challenging market conditions. At the Trade Union Confederation of the America's Lula noted that all efforts are being made to restore everyone's right to making a living

from their work, with dignity, and to receiving just remuneration and a quality retirement system. He does highlight that there are immense amounts of precarious, 'self-employed' workers in Brazil who don't have any employer to turn to when something goes wrong. The gig economy in Brazil poses a major economic challenge. This economy is worth billions- and at the end of September last year the transportation sector had more the 1.7 million couriers, taxi drivers, app drivers and other types of self-employed workers. On 23% of these workers contribute to Brazil's social security system and in 2016, only 40% of these were covered by social security. These workers historically are very difficult to organise also so the job of the trade union movement to rebuild in these sectors.

Workers representatives

Now, Brazil's Finance, Labour, and Social Security ministries are creating a committee that will include workers' representatives, policymakers, and companies to discuss a proposal to regulate Brazil's gig economy. The committee's work will focus on the logistics and mobility sectors and are likely to be influenced by other initiatives from the new administration. Regulating this economy is essential to combat precarity amongst Brazil's working class and to rebuild mass working class organisation. The trade unions are at the forefront of this, but it is a huge challenge to Lula's government.

The majority of Brazilian women voted for Lula- the third Lula government has the largest number of female ministers in history. Eleven women, five black ministers, and two indigenous ministers were appointed to the Lula cabinet- a huge contrast to Bolsonaro's government. Lula has also pledged to reinstate the Ministry of Women, merged into another ministry during Bolsonaro's administration. He has also promised to strengthen institutional support to survivors of gender-based violence. Lula pledged to strengthen the public health system, improving access to sexual and reproductive health.

Lula's historic comeback and the defeat of Bolsonaro are filled with potential, but it cannot be realized by the efforts of the government alone. There are many challenges that Lula's government face and the conditions that they operate in are not necessarily in favour of a left progressive government. Advancing a truly progressive agenda will require organisation and support from the labour movement, popular movements and organisation of the working class.

MICAELA TRACEY RAMOS IS A YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE MEMBER AND UNISON ACTIVIST

COMMUNIST PARTY THEORY & DISCUSSION

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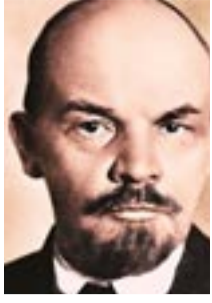


Andrew Murray's original 2015 book *Empire and Ukraine* set the Ukraine crisis in its global and local context and drew the lessons needed for the anti-war movement as great power conflict returned to Europe and threatened a new 'cold war'.

That New Cold War has arrived with the NATO expansion into central and eastern Europe - a principal factor in this present war - and an essential elements in the US drive to counter China's growing economic, commercial and diplomatic strength.

The resurgence of the war party in Labour's leadership adds a new urgency to the arguments in this book which brings together an abridged version of the 2015 book, the full text of Andrew Murray's pamphlet *Empire and the Ukraine 2022* with a new introduction.

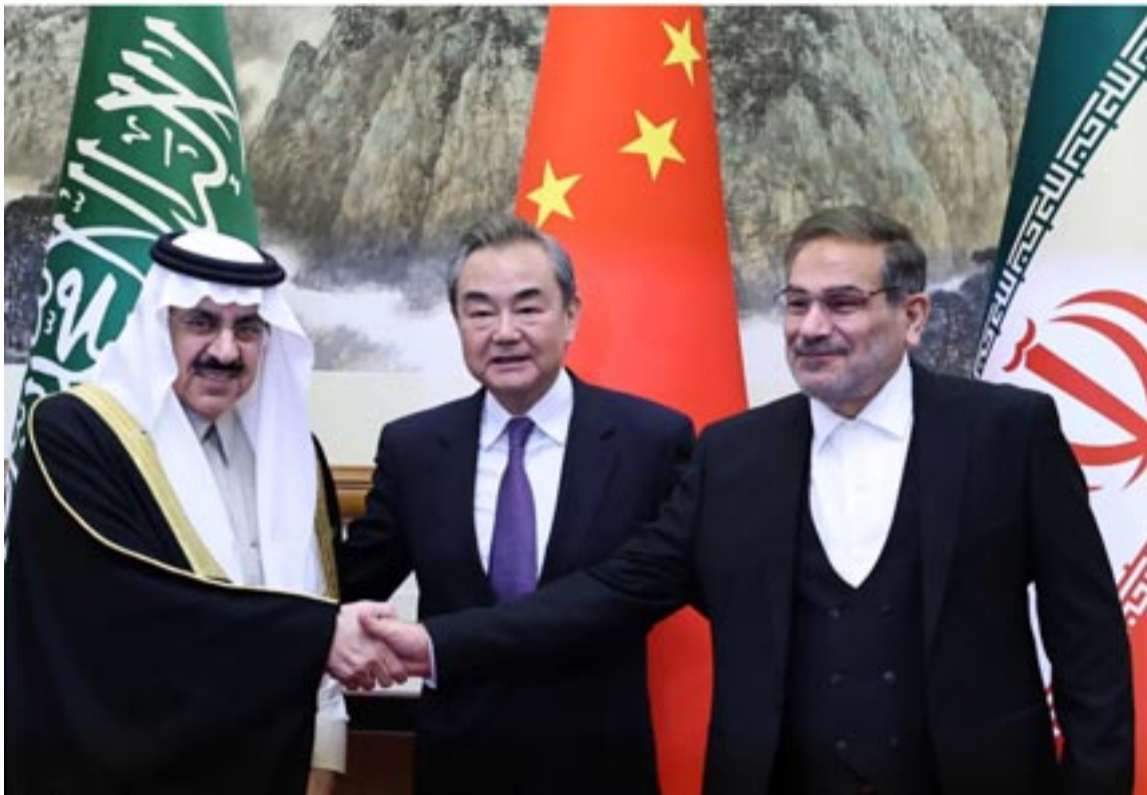
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SOCIALIST CONSTRUCTION

‘As long as we live in a small-peasant country, there is a surer economic basis for capitalism in Russia than for communism. This must be borne in mind. Anyone who has carefully observed life in the countryside, as compared with life in the towns, knows that we have not torn out the roots of capitalism and have not undermined the foundation, the basis of the internal enemy. The latter depends on small-scale production, and there is only one way of undermining it, namely, to place the economy of the country, including agriculture, on a new technical basis, the technical basis of modern large-scale production’ **VI Lenin**

IMPLICATIONS OF THE IRANIAN-SAUDI BILATERAL DÉTENTE MEDIATED BY CHINA



Senior Chinese diplomat Wang Yi, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani and minister of state of Saudi Arabia Musaad bin Mohammed Al Aiban meeting in Beijing on 10 March 2023
China Daily picture

THE RECENT AGREEMENT reached between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Beijing – facilitated and mediated by the China – represents a new and important development that could have major implications for the course of future political developments in the Middle East and the pattern of geo-strategic allegiances in this sensitive region. The breakthrough was achieved through China's careful handling of negotiations between the two Islamist dictatorships – the two main sectarian spheres in the Middle East – since the latter part of 2022, with the aim of bringing about a win-win scenario for all concerned parties.

This unprecedented initiative on the part of China, the first of this magnitude in Beijing's foreign diplomacy – not only in relation to the Middle East, but the wider world – is a clear demonstration of China's resolve and its growing political and diplomatic clout as a major power, as well as the shift away from the US-oriented unipolarity that has prevailed for the last thirty years.

Background

These developments began with the arrival of Chinese President Xi in Saudi Arabia for a three-day visit on 7 December 2022. The Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported that Xi was visiting at the invitation

of Saudi King Salman “to bolster historic ties and strategic partnership between the two countries”. SPA reported that initial agreements worth \$29.26bn were due to be signed during the bilateral summit. China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, confirmed that President Xi would also be attending the inaugural China-Arab States Summit and the China-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit in Riyadh.

Reports of the visit and associated agreements indicate that a central driver of the Chinese government's diplomatic charm offensive was to progress its strategic endeavour to further its reach towards Middle East markets, as well as shore-up reliable energy resources much needed for its expanding economy. Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated in October 2022 that Saudi Arabia was a “priority” in China's overall diplomatic strategy for the region.

The fact that President Xi was prepared to outwardly endorse the UAE's baseless claim over three islands in the Persian Gulf on the final day of his visit demonstrates China's resolve to secure at all costs a deepening and firming of warm diplomatic relations with the Arab regencies in the Persian Gulf. For its part, Iran summoned the Chinese ambassador to Tehran two days later, on 12

December, to express its condemnation of China's endorsement of the UAE's claims – with Tehran repeating its insistence that the three islands form an inseparable part of Iranian sovereign territory.

A road out of isolation?

It is interesting to note that the Chinese mediation efforts began on the back of a number of prior meetings between the Islamic Republic regime and the Saudi leadership which had been taking place since 2021. These meetings were convened between official representatives of the two governments as well as those from the US and Europe. It is abundantly clear that the regime in Tehran is desperate for the JCPOA, or an equivalent agreement, to be reached and for paralysing sanctions to be lifted so that Iran's devastated economy can be revived.

It is clear that the constant fluctuations and vacillations in the foreign policy stance of the Islamic Republic regime are borne of its desperation and complete bankruptcy – both literally and figuratively – as well as its acute vulnerability in the face of ongoing US sanctions.

Furthermore, in specific regard to China's more prominent involvement in affairs relating to the Middle East region; this is an important plank of China's macro-political-economic plans in the international arena. And while these plans undoubtedly reflect the particular interests on the part of China, its primary strategic objectives are predicated on the de-escalation of hostilities and tensions and expansion of trade relations – which run completely contrary to the confrontational, militaristic, and tension-building policies of the US.

The Islamic Republic's leadership is thus forced into a definitive about-turn in its foreign policy in light of the dual threats posed by its precarious economic situation – a major factor fuelling huge civil unrest within the country – and an ever-more hostile environment in terms of its international relations. Thus, the theocratic regime ruling Iran is manifestly unable to manage or even ride-out the country's multifaceted crises, leading to an almost-perpetual mood of defiance and protest at home, on the one hand; while it becomes even more internationally isolated in the meantime, rendering it even more susceptible and vulnerable to external pressures, on the other. The regime is acutely aware that if this

impasse continues unchecked, it will have no way of managing the snowball effect of this mega-crisis – leading only to further and stronger waves of protest and, potentially, an uprising of the kind that could bring an end to the Islamic Republic once and for all.

Such is the regime's current susceptibility and weakness that ultimately, whether in terms of the nuclear negotiations or a change of course in foreign policy, the US is now in a position to interfere in Iran's sovereign affairs and affect internal developments in the country seemingly at will.

The increasingly dangerous global situation and the ever-worsening of tensions between the military superpowers, which the US-led imperialist countries are trying to intensify, must not be confused or entangled with secondary phenomena and events, thereby detracting from the ultimate focus on defending peace. And, pursuant to this, it should not be expected that the change we are witnessing in some international equations as well as the 180-degree turn of the theocratic regime's foreign policy will somehow lead to a fundamental change in the anti-people nature of the provincial in Iran or the unjust political economy it presides over.

A development to be supported

The Iran-Saudi détente, if implemented, has the potential to seriously challenge the influence of the US and its partners in the Middle East, as well as deal a serious blow to the various mal-designs they have pursued without restraint since the early-1990s – such as the “Greater Middle East”, the “New Middle East”, “Creative Chaos”, the “Abraham Accords”, and the “Arab NATO”.

The development of normal bilateral neighbourly relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia would of course close the door on one of the most important sources of “Creative Chaos” in the region – one exploited by the US and Israel for decades and based on the prefabricated animosity between Sunni and Shia domains, which has served to confound and exhaust an entire region and render its individual nations susceptible to imperialist extortion and plunder.

The détente could well provide a foundation for the long-overdue resolution of a number of devastating proxy conflicts in the region, thus greatly enhancing the prospects for peace in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine.

CUBA RECOVERS AFTER THE COVID PANDEMIC

Steve Johnson

CUBA

THE YEARS since the start of the COVID pandemic have been difficult for Cuba against the backdrop of the US blockade and Trump's measures which despite some initial hopes Biden has done little to alleviate.

In addition to COVID Cuba has also had to deal with the fall out from the Ukraine war and the impact of Hurricane Ian. There is clearly a hope by US imperialism that the combined effect of this and other natural disasters will lead to growing discontent giving more opportunities for destabilisation.

However as previously in Cuba's history of building Socialism US strategy does not go according to plan. Cuba's first-class medical system has produced vaccines for COVID and in comparison, with the capitalist world has kept deaths to a minimum. Recent visitors to Cuba also report that despite occasional power cuts the impact of the hurricane is now much less noticeable. The introduction of the single Cuban peso also seems to have stabilised the currency exchange rate.

This is all testament to Cuba's participatory democracy but problems still remain and the tourist industry has suffered a blow due to the combined impacts of the pandemic and the general economic crisis in

the capitalist world. Campaigning against the blockade is still key and it is necessary to counter the misapprehension many people in the wider labour movement have that the blockade was ended by Obama. The Biden administration has shown little inclination to reverse the policies of Trump in respect of Cuba and has continued Cuba's designation as “a state sponsor of terrorism” an absurd proposition from a country that has backed terrorist attacks on Cuba.

Another example of Cuba's grass roots participatory democracy has been the adoption of the new Family Code enshrining rights for LGBT people despite a campaign against the code by evangelical

Christians. Nor were they prevented from campaigning despite claims in the Western media that religious believers are persecuted in Cuba. But the positive result of the referendum shows how deeply rooted values of equality are amongst the Cuban population.

Cuba has always shown that despite difficulties and attacks it will continue to develop and improve its Socialist system. We have a responsibility to show solidarity and to continue to oppose the US blockade.

STEVE JOHNSON IS A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AMERICAS GROUP



HEAVEN AND EARTH

The intimate daily contact with harsh reality began to fray the fabric of my religious convictions... I was beginning to learn that our poverty – the lack of the most basic human necessities – was not caused or altered by the will of any deity. The source of our misery was not in heaven but on earth. It arose from institutions established by men which could be altered or destroyed by other men.” **Dolores Ibárruri, *La Pasionaria*** Spanish Communist leader

COMMUNISTS UNDER STATE ASSAULT



Reporting direct from Venezuela Paul Dobson exposes a state provocation directed at the Venezuelan communists

▲ A reporter from the state-run VTV channel reports from a staged meeting of fake PCV members in Monagas state – PSUV members and civil servants dressed up as political mercenaries – which supposedly called for the ‘rescue’ of the Communist Party.

Paul Dobson
Reporting from Venezuela

SOUNDS INCREDULOUS, but it’s true. Venezuela’s ruling United Socialist Party (PSUV) took some of their members, added a few subservient public servants and allies and dressed them up in Communist Party (PCV) t-shirts. They gave them PCV flags and caps, and put them on centre stage of a pro-government rally in Caracas, the final prop in the staged theatrics during which PSUV Number Two Diosdado Cabello would publically “salute” the “rebellious” communists who had turned their back on the PCV’s leadership recently

electd at the XVI Congress in order to back the government’s (neoliberal, pro-capital) position.

This was followed by further theatrics in Cabello’s home Monagas state, in which a number of well-paid props (political mercenaries) were put in a 4 Star hotel and told state journalists how they were organising to “rescue” the PCV and realign it with the government.

These theatrics would be laughably absurd if they didn’t carry a very real danger below the surface. The proven non-PCV members have already stated that they will submit a lawsuit to the Supreme Court to replace the PCV leadership. Weekly defamation against PCV general secretary Oscar Figuera and the PCV’s Central Committee and renewed calls from Cabello to “rescue” the PCV continues. Parallel illegitimate groups of non-PCV members using the PCV’s name are popping up in some states and on social media.

The threat of a government-led intervention into the Party, be it through the Supreme Court, electoral disqualification, the seizure of Party HQ and assets (alongside its symbols and name) seems ever closer.

But the rank and file of the PCV, its Central Committee, Political Bureau and the International Communist Movement are firm in their commitment to respect the decisions taken through democratic centralism and our XVI Congress (at which the CPB was present): party democracy and the resolve to struggle against the pro-capital stance of the government – which is at the centre of this divergence – is strong.

strengthen the UP brand, not form her own. She has done so to give herself more authority but also to make a break with the UP brand which has been losing votes. It has failed to gain representatives in regional elections such as Galicia and Castilla la Mancha, but also had disappointing results in the Basque Country, Cataluña, Madrid and more recently Andalucía.

With regional elections at the end of May and a general election in December, Sumar has announced that it will only be standing nationally as hasn’t had time to organise for the locals. This has left the parties clamouring to reach agreements for the May elections with some success in more areas than others. Currently there are more agreements than in 2019, but with national tensions between Sumar and Podemos still unresolved at a national level, things are not easy.

One recent poll suggested that going to the general elections together in December could result in Sumar getting 18.7% of the vote resulting in 59 seats, 25 more than UP got in 2019. If Podemos were to go separately, which is something that has been suggested, it would be considerably less.

A good result on the left of the PSOE is needed if it wants to renew the current coalition government and avoid the risk of a coalition government between the right wing Partido Popular and far right Vox. This risk is very real with both parties doing well in the polls over the past year. Third place will be an important one for who ever aspires to govern. Furthermore, more power in the government would allow Sumar to demand more radical changes in policy.

The PSOE has continually watered down laws that were agreed in 2019 coalition pact. The housing law, animal protection, gag law have all been much less ambitious in practice. May’s results whether gains or losses will set the tempo for the wider left for December.

Modernisation promotes well-rounded development



Yi Fan
MODERN CHINA

IN HIS *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, Karl Marx describes the alienation of labour under capitalism, ‘the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces ... The devaluation of the world of men is in direct proportion to the increasing value of the world of things’.

His gloomy point is being vindicated in much of the rich world as working people struggle to get by while the super-rich are having it cushy. But Marx did give us hope — ‘a higher phase of communist society’ will arrive ‘after the productive forces have ... increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly’.

This, too, is being lived out, in China, where modernisation is turning over a new leaf. In Hengdian, a town once gripped by abject poverty in China’s Zhejiang Province, the locals — with government support — have built for themselves a life many would envy: a billion-dollar film industry above that empowers the local community and enables broad-based prosperity; quality education, housing, health and elderly care; a green environment; museums which house a dazzling array of fun exhibitions all year round.

Richness in its rich sense.

This is one of many stories unfolding in China, as Chinese President Xi Jinping vows to blaze a path of modernisation not prescribed in any rule book and untrodten thus far in human history — one that does not exploit the masses to enrich a few, but aims for common prosperity for all; not devaluates or alienates the man but promotes all-round development of the individual; not pits itself against but seeks harmony with Mother Nature; not pillages those beyond one’s borders, but contributes to world peace and prosperity.

Modernisation in its exploitative, egoistic form as we know it is being superseded. The biggest difference is that China’s approach puts the people front and centre. Serving the people is seen as the immutable aim of development. In supporting their innovation and entrepreneurship, China believes greater productive forces will be set free, which in turn will create conditions for the people to be their freer, better selves. Wealth becomes a means, not an end. In Xi Jinping’s own words, “Chinese modernisation is the modernisation of the man.”

When China, or any of us, talks about the people’s well-being, capitalist fear-mongers would cry egalitarianism, state power encroaching on the market, or wealth of the rich under threat.

Their narrative belies ignorance of Marxism, which emphasizes that productive forces are critical to social progress and the free development of every man and all men. Well versed in the basic tenets of this theory, China has all these years been building a business-friendly climate and encouraging entrepreneurship. That explains its awe-inspiring success in delivering a better life for its people. Now it has all the more reason to keep doing this, because people-oriented modernisation demands ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs’.

China’s intention to strengthen charity programmes should be commended, not demonised. If we have learned anything from their recent hardships, the working people need government protection and should not be left to the whims of the penny-pinching capitalists for an affordable trip to the grocery or the doctor.

China’s search for a break from the old model of modernisation is an antidote the world urgently needs right now. Its sheer scale — the modernisation of 1.4 billion people — promises a possibility with worldwide implications, as Friedrich Engels noted in 1880, “the possibility of securing for every member of society an existence not only fully sufficient materially but guaranteeing to all the free development and exercise of their physical and mental faculties’.

China’s determination to find a new path to modernisation and common prosperity deserves three cheers from us all.

TYI FAN IS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE STRAITS TIMES, THE BRUSSELS TIMES, CHINA-US FOCUS, CHINA DAILY, ETC.)

SPANISH LEFT PREPARES FOR POLLS



McGuire
Reporting from Madrid

YOLANDA DÍAZ, above labour minister and second vice president, is set to announce her candidacy for her new platform Sumar (Add). This political initiative aims to put civil society first whilst uniting the parties to the left of the socialist party, the PSOE.

Díaz says that citizens will decide Sumar’s electoral lists, however there is a conflict with Podemos about how these lists will be formed. The status of Podemos is threatened by the new platform as it struggles to adjust to being another left wing party alongside Izquierda Unida (IU)/Communist Party of Spain (PCE), the Comunes, various regional parties, and their rival and splinter party Más País, all of whom have a good relationships with Díaz and have voiced support for her as candidate.

Díaz first came to fame as labour minister when her COVID furlough scheme made her the most popular politician in the country, even more so than PM Pedro Sánchez with whom

also has a good relationship. Her calm and more professional approach to politics contrasts with the eight years of Pablo Iglesias’s populism and agitation. As a labour lawyer she has a good relationship with the unions and puts an emphasis on dialogue to reach agreements with various representative sectors of society. She has overseen a popular labour reform and been present when the government has raised minimum wage by over 300 euros in four years. Formally a member of Izquierda Unida, she currently only holds an ‘historic membership’ to the PCE and presents herself as without a party, yet defends the historical democratic gains made in the name of the PCE.

The current agreement between IU and Podemos at a national level, referred to as Unidas Podemos (UP) is tense because of the new platform. Díaz was handed the leadership of the parliamentary group by Pablo Iglesias in 2021 when he stood down as vice president to head the list in the Madrid regional elections. Since then he has made the jump to journalism. Both he and Podemos expected Díaz to



IN MEMORY OF MARX

Marx saw and understood the enormous power and potential of our class to confront and defeat our class enemies. More than that, he saw the possibilities of building a society free from poverty and degradation. A society in which every human being might reach their full potential as a human being. **Fran Heathcote, President PCS giving the 2023 Marx Oration**



Fran Heathcote and Kevan Nelson spoke at the 2023 Commemoration at the Highgate grave site of Karl Marx. Alex Gordon chaired the event.

Kevan Nelson KARL MARX ORATION

THE 14 MARCH 2023 is the 140th anniversary of the death in London of Karl Marx – an anniversary which is being marked by communist and workers parties worldwide. We are seeing today – in the great strike movement that has unfolded over the last year – the working out of the principal contradictions in 21st century capitalist society.

These are not new phenomena. Writing in the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1853 on the subject of the Labour movement in Britain Marx takes note of the movement unfolding and sets out with great clarity how he saw strikes. He was, in his own words convinced: “that the alternative rise and fall of wages, and the continual conflicts between masters and men resulting therefrom, are, in the present organisation of industry, the indispensable means of holding up the spirit of the labouring classes, of combining them into one great association against the encroachments of the ruling class, and of preventing them from becoming apathetic, thoughtless, more or less well-fed instruments of production.”

Militancy

We can see this today when every strike ballot

produces overwhelming majorities, when the legal barriers erected by the Tories – and, it must be said, kept in place by successive Labour governments – fails to stifle the rising tide of militancy.

What is remarkable about the present strike wave is firstly its striking unity bringing together workers from many different sectors, some of whom are striking for the first time ever.

Secondly, and importantly there is the profound feminisation of industrial action which reflects the real character of the trade movement as a movement of the whole of society. This is reinforced by the sense in which strikers are felt to represent the whole of society against the employers and their government.

It is the very intransigence of the government in insisting that working people and their families must bear the cost of this profit-driven inflation – while the rich get ever richer and public services and utilities are treated as unending sources of dividends – that turns every picket line into a celebration.

Mass struggle

In asserting the enervating effect of workers entering into struggle Marx concentrates, not simply on the wages question, but on the political importance of the mass movement to

the struggle for democracy.

Marx goes on to reflect on: “what importance the present labour-crisis must turn out to the Chartist movement in England” and gave a vivid description of what he described as the “first great open air meeting.” of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Chartists.

The very mass character and moral certainty of today’s strikers is something of a shock to the employers and the government. Even though workers are conscious that their wages have lost a large part of purchasing power there is a real willingness to further forfeit wages in order to strike and strike again.

In his *The Poverty of Philosophy* Marx writes: “If the first aim of resistance was merely the maintenance of wages, in preparation as the capitalists in their turn have combined with the idea of repression, the combinations at first isolated, constitute themselves in groups, and face always united capital, the maintenance of the association becomes more necessary to them than that of wages. This is so true that the English economists are amazed to see the workers sacrifice a great part of their wages in favour of the associations which, in the eyes of these economists, are established solely in favour wages.”

For Marx the term ‘economist’ – far from signifying the profession that today is settled into mutually hostile camps – was then attached to those whose ambitions were satisfied merely by the movement of wages.

Today, these dismal creatures can be found concentrated in Starmer’s front bench and are no less opposed to industrial action than the earlier trends in the workers movement which thought that strikes were counter productive.

When Labour politicians refuse to back strikers they reprise the old myth that a general rise in wages merely leads to a general rise in prices and thus brings no benefit. They do not see the every increasing union of the workers as a benefit.

This approach is instinctively rejected by a whole generation of working people who see a daily demonstration on the shelves of the supermarket and in their energy bills that far from wage rises being the root of inflation it is, instead, the drive to profit by the

employers, by the big monopolies in retail and energy and the banks.

In 2013 another German Communist of historical importance, Hans Modrow gave the Marx oration on this spot. Sadly Hans died last month and in respecting his immense contribution to the German working class we remember his warning that ‘on a world scale, the very existence of a socialist community kept capitalism within its limits. Now we are witnessing developments which show clearly the danger the current economic and social system poses to humanity’

The sordid corruption and venal influence peddling that characterises the relationship between government ministers and rapacious corporations today gives a contemporary relevance to the assertion by Karl Marx: “As the lords of the land and capital always make use of their political privileges to defend and perpetuate their economic monopolies and to enslave labour, the conquest of political power becomes the great duty of the proletariat.”

State power

How the conquest of political power by Britain’s working people is to be achieved and how – in the centre of the world’s second most power imperial machine and the citadel of Capital – working class state power is to be defended and how that power can be wielded is the question posed by demonstrable unfitness to rule of our corrupt ruling class.

The political fissures in the working class movement were identified by Lenin in his *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*.

But in today’s movement of the masses, in the exuberance and discipline of the picket lines we see in embryo the forces that will bring about a revolution.

First, in consciousness and then in organisation to give form to this sense of class and then in a political instrument to rule as a class. Revolution is, as Lenin described ‘the festival of the oppressed and exploited’.

KEVAN NELSON IS THE COMMUNIST PARTY’S INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY AND SPOKE AT THE ANNUAL COMMEMORATION OF MARX’S DEATH

KUWAIT

19 March 2023

The annulment of the parliamentary assembly of 2022 deepens the crisis and represents a departure from the “June 22 speech”... What is required is a political exit within the framework of the constitution that puts an end to the unpopular parliamentary assembly of 2020

With the issuance of the Constitutional Court ruling annulling the recent parliamentary elections and the resulting National Assembly, and reinstating the popularly rejected Parliament of 2020, the authority in Kuwait has exhausted its remaining balance of goodwill and hope that was preserved for it by a good segment of the people, this balance, which was formed on objective and imaginary grounds less than three years ago, was exhausted by the authority at a record speed through its undemocratic approach and its abject and repeated failure to run the country.

Now, returning to the series of abolishing the National Assembly under formal pretexts does not only bring us back to a tragic situation that we have already lived through about thirteen years ago and still is, but rather it represents a farcical situation in which the absurdity and lack of a sense of responsibility in managing the state reaches an unprecedented extent in the modern history of Kuwait, which is what it requires popular reunion and cohesion to resist frustration and despair, and to firmly defend the constitutional and political gains.

In this context, and far from discussing the formal and non-essential constitutional and legal grounds for the truth behind the ruling of the Constitutional Court, what concerns us is that Kuwait is suffering today, more than ever, from a stifling and raging general crisis, mainly due to three interrelated factors represented in:

- The dominance of the decision-making

approach and the mentality of sheikhdom.

- The intensification of declared and hidden conflicts between the centers of influence and forces within the authority and its dominant capitalist class alliance, even if the names have changed and the locations have changed.

Third: The narrow class interests of the influential powers that conflict with the interests of the overwhelming majority of citizens rule. These are the narrow class interests that seek to take over the capabilities of the state and control the joints of the political administration in it.

The **Kuwaiti Progressive Movement** has previously asserted more than once that as long as these causes, factors and contradictions exist, and as long as they control the political scene and state administration, the crisis that Kuwait has been suffering since 2010 cannot be resolved, rather it will deepen, and this explains the successive episodes of the long series of this crisis.

It must be noted that the continuation of the popularly rejected 2020 Council means a retreat from those positive elements mentioned in the Amiri speech on June 22, 2022, which did not come out of nowhere, but came in response to the growing popular and parliamentary movement in those days after the sit-in of the deputies in the Council and the night sit-ins of citizens in diwanias of the deputies and in Al-Irada Square, where the continuation of the 2020 Council contradicts the most important contents of that speech, specifically that important paragraph in which

the Emiri decision to dissolve the Council was announced in response to the popular will, and it reads: “We decided under compulsion and based on the desire of the people and in respect of their will to resort to the Constitution, the covenant that we accepted, and based on our constitutional right stipulated in Article (107) of the Constitution, to dissolve the National Assembly in a constitutional way and to call for general elections, in accordance with the procedures, dates, and constitutional and legal controls, and our goal from this The constitutional solution is the sure and sincere desire for the people themselves to say the final word in the process of correcting the course of the political scene again, by choosing who represents them, the right choice, which reflects the aspirations and hopes of this people, and the decree of dissolution and the call for elections will be issued in the coming months, God willing, after Preparing the necessary legal arrangements for that.”

In view of the exacerbation of the already dire situation, and in order to spare the country the consequences of the intensification and explosion of the general crisis, it is necessary to move seriously towards:

First: Commitment to constitutional democratic guarantees and public rights and freedoms, and the pursuit of a practical and quick political exit within the framework of the constitution, that stops any negative repercussions, and prevents some stalker parties from taking advantage of this crisis

situation to implement malicious agendas hostile to the interests of the people and the rights and freedoms of citizens.

Second: The dissolution of the 2020 Council, which was popularly rejected.

Third: Holding accountable those responsible for deliberately inserting procedural loopholes since 2012 to invalidate the parliamentary elections, and demanding the authority to apologize for this abject, repeated, and irresponsible failure.

Fourth: Formation of a new government that will supervise the holding of fair parliamentary elections, within the framework of commitment to these directives, and to the positive elements mentioned in the. Amiri speech on June 22, 2022

Fifth: Holding the political forces to their national and historical responsibilities in confronting attempts to tamper with the constitution and underestimate the popular will.

In conclusion, we call on the proud Kuwaiti people and their living forces to resist frustration and despair, to be politically vigilant towards what the hostile parties are plotting against the popular will, and to unite their ranks and movements in defence of their rights and freedoms, while being aware that the battle with the authority may be prolonged and escalate.

CRUSH ANTI-STRIKE LAWS!

